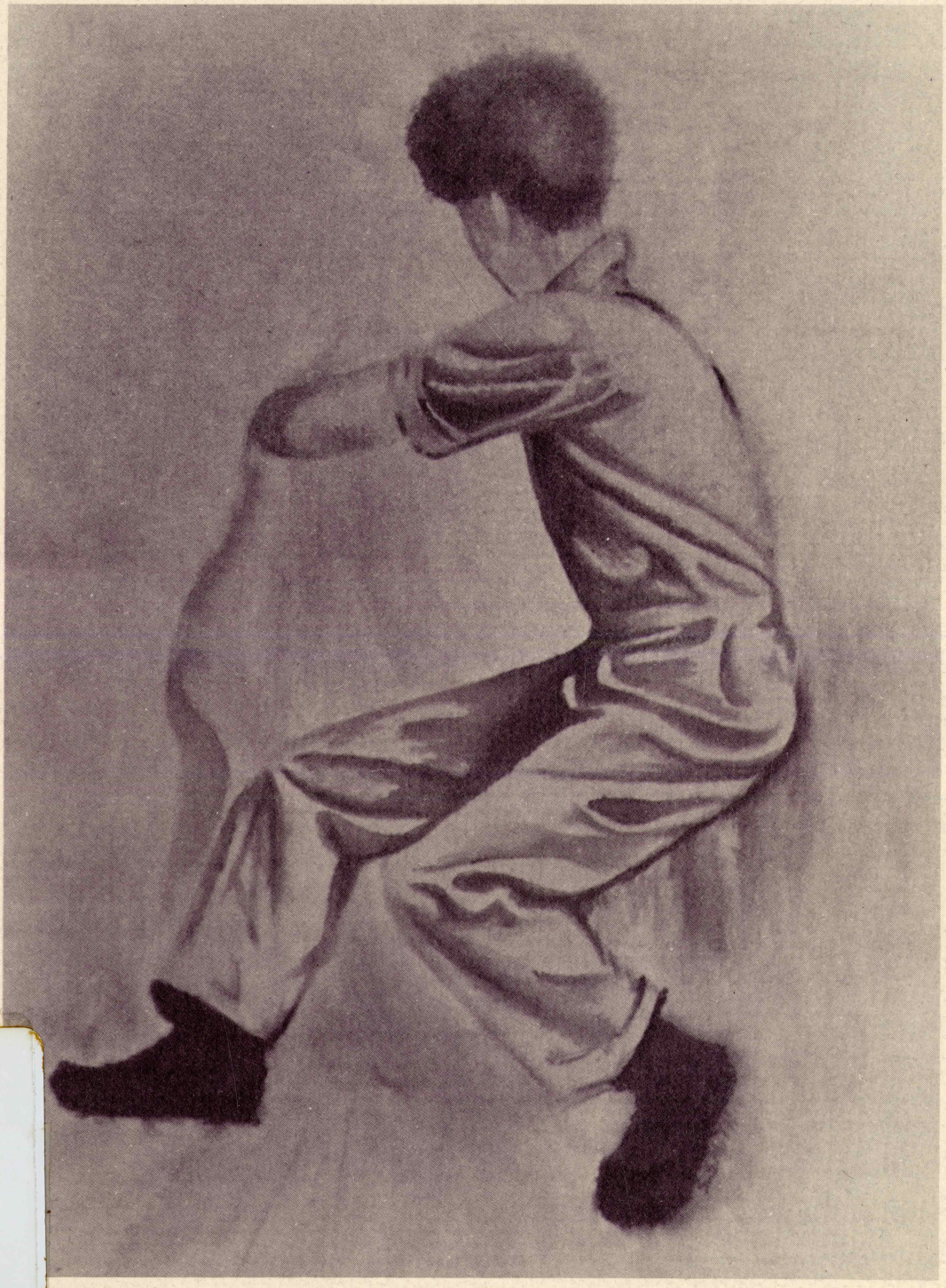
TOWER

1991



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TOWER

Literature and Arts Magazine of the University of Montevallo

"The desire to be singular
and to astonish
by ways out of the
ordinary
seems to me to be
the source of
many virtues"

Marie de Sevigne

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Tracy Lyons, Editor

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CONTENTS

Poetry

3	Windows	Gina M. Killingsworth
4	Waiting	Gina M. Killingsworth
5	The Public Crowded Place	Jay M. Ritchie
6	Welfare Line	Carolyn Heath
10	Untitled	Melody Pate
11	Odysseus' Excuse	Deborah M. Berthelot
12	Cleansing	Lori Lassiter
14	D's of Life	Michael Shine
15	A Deeper Peace	Jerri B. Hardesty
16	Short Tragedy	Aimee K. Thornton
16	My Spell	Aimee K. Thornton
17	Staring at a Wall	Jay M. Ritchie
18	Song on the Sidewalk	Sharon Evans
19	From Within	C. Fleetion
20	Uncertainty	Alejandra De La Paz
21	Emily Knew	Melody Pate
22	Oughta	Lori Lassiter
23	Untitled	Michelle Durham
24	You Won't Find Them Screaming	Lori Lassiter

Prose

2	Her Destiny	Jerri B. Hardesty
7	Blue Diamonds	S. L. Stone
13	Book Bag	Sheryll Romano

Art/Photography

1	Endless Tresses	Shelia Smith
6	Old Lady	Shelia Smith
14	Untitled	Shelia Smith
17	Dominican Wheels	Alejandra De La Paz
24	Untitled	Shelia Smith

***Cover** Shelia Smith

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Endless Tresses — Shelia Smith

HER DESTINY

She wanted only to sleep in this noon heat, her head heavy with the thought as the news droned on. The newsman began saying, "Another brutal rape has occured on the city's west side."

She snapped awake. This was what she awaited.

"Once again a park has been the scene of the crime. Once again the victim has been blonde, beautiful and alone."

This was the sixth rape in this area in two weeks. The perpetrator was a serial sicko. Victim number two died of internal injuries.

"Still no suspect has been named, and we urge women away from the park at night.

She pushed the button. The picture and sound faded as she pressed her lips together tightly and clenched her teeth. She knew what must be done. She'd done it before.

She succumbed to her sleepiness and awoke soon after dark. Her eyes were steel in the light of her lamp, but living steel, glowing softly with her apprehension. She stretched into something blue and shimmery that molded to her curves like a glove.

She drove only four miles to a dimly-lit park, her apprehension becoming excitement. She had studied his pattern. She was sure he would be here. She left her car and glided into the moonlight. She surveyed the area, once, then passed into the darkness of the trees.

He saw her as soon as she drove up. Her hair was somewhat lighter, her complexion a bit more pale, but her sleek body was very similar. Yes, as she left her car, he saw that she was enough like the other one to spark the same groggy rage, like a knife in his groin. He felt such hatred and anger, he growled under his breath thinking how he would hurt her, like he'd been hurt. And she was going into the woods on her own! There would be no noisy scene with fists and struggling this time. He was on the move, on the prowl.

She heard the sound first, a snapping twig, then the rest of her senses confirmed his presence. She didn't turn her head, she knew where he was. She thought of those innocent victims, summoning courage from their pain, then turned to meet him.

She doesn't even know I'm here, about to punish her for my suffering. She doesn't suspect a thing as I prepare to take her in the dirt. I hate her so much! I'll show her just how much.

He reaches for her as she turns and reaches for him. Something about the color of her eyes makes him hesitate, but he's committed. He wrestles her hard against his body. She feels warm, then hot, much too hot. She growls as he releases her, a raspy sound from deep in her diaphragm. He cries out only once as his neck and chest are slashed to flowing red ribbons by the white tiger now facing him. The kill was quick.

Later, she sits at home with the blood on her hands and cries softly. It's just her destiny.

Gina M. Killingsworth

WINDOWS

A child sits restless in a narrow desk
with classroom smells of chalk and sweaty bodies.
He sees, through the smudged panes trimmed with
white, a vast fragrant greenness for turning
cartwheels.
He waits impatiently for freedom.

A woman sits weary in her faded living room
with husband slumbering heavily through sitcoms.
She sees, past the dusty curtains bought long ago,
a wild moonlit wilderness made for trysting.
She longs silently for freedom.

I snuggle cozy in my bedroom
with his comforting strong arms encircling my waist.
I see, through the half-open window and screen,
nothing that pulls my heart from this sweet safety.
Freedom waits patiently for me.

WAITING

The telephone sits silently.
The beige plastic blares its silence.
Any minute it should erupt
with messages yellow and purple
from his soothing aqua voice.
But there is only silence.
Beige silence.

The couple lies silently.
Blue twilight darkens the still room.
Any minute he should answer
her timid pink sentence
with a deep crimsom declaration.
But there is only silence.
Blue silence.

The woman sits silently.
Black metal gleams in her hands.
At this minute she decides
to end her tearful green waiting
with an orange-white explosion.
And now there is silence.
Black silence.

Jay M. Ritchie

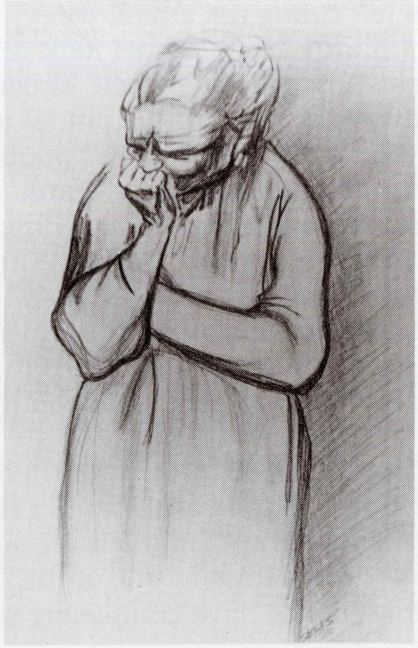
THE PUBLIC CROWDED PLACE

Standing in a public crowded place,
I wonder why they are here.
I search for the eloquent expressions
of explanation, the triumphant
feeling of expectation.
The large people give a great need
of love and founder, searching
for the beginning of an emotion
undevoted.
So the want of satisfying every
desire, they come, giving only
that which they can give, needing
more than they can take.
The loads they bear are tremendous
and strenuous, but loving.
Many give what they cannot, and
try dying, before they can live.
They live a fantasy dream over many
ages and learn that it was only
worth the passion of their dreams.
That public crowded place, that
wanton device of need and desire
gives only nothing.
They flood the platform and
overcrowd the helping hand.
It has become an apparatus of pleasure
and lust, no man can stand.
Women desert.
It is burdening, that site, to
the children given a chance to
save it. Little do they know
that it has become a place
we all want to crave.
Fullfillment of the soul becomes
this place, and the public
makes it crowded and keeps it down.
Who are we to overcome?

Carolyn Heath

WELFARE LINE

Tired of standin' in 'dis welfare line
To get some money from dem.
People ridin' by looking at me
Thinkin' I'm commitin' some sin.
They look down their shiny rich noses
As if they know my kind.
But they don't have no idea
Why I'm in this line.
Why I'd like to yell, "My babies are hungry
And my man's outta work for a time."
So see there rich folk, I gotta reason
For standin' in 'dis line.
I ain't trying to rob you or raise yo taxes high.
As a matter of fact, rich man, I ain't never committed no crime.
I'm just tryin' to survive like you,
That' why I'm in dis line.
So turn around rich man with yo' accusin' eye.
I'm tired of you lookin' at me thinkin' I don't try.
Just look a little closer and see my head held high.
Why, that's more than you could do if you were in 'dis line.



Old Lady Shelia Smith

BLUE DIAMONDS

Randy arrived with a van load of other horses the Colonel had purchased in Atlanta. Most of them were untrained three and four year olds, or "green" as they are known in the horse world. The Colonel would buy, sell, trade, train you, your horse or any combination thereof, for whatever amount of money or any kind of deal you agree on. As for me, never having enough money to own my own horse, I hung out at the local stables, took lessons when I could and rode other folks' horses when they needed a rider. When the Colonel came to this country and opened the riding school, he offered free lessons for the "greenies" and guess who was the first to sign up. I had done quite a bit of fox hunting and had even ridden several three-day events, but never had I ridden fences against the clock, show jumping clean rounds with the fastest time.

Every day after work I would head for the riding school, and every day as I rounded the first curve in the narrow driveway, I would be greeted by this most polished young woman astride her equally polished horse. I had never seen a racking horse except in the pictures. I could never understand why anyone would put shoes that high on a horse's front feet and a bit that big in the mouth, and then think that the contorted way in which it was forced to move was pretty! Rita, as she introduced herself, had parked this big, black wind-up toy of hers right in front of my cart. I was not the least bit interested in meeting her, but I was trapped.

"Hey-ee-ay," her blue-blood southern ancestry gushed from her mouth in a high sing-song.

"Hullo," I said, and the moment I acknowledged her existence she decided she would be my life-long best friend.

Rita would sit on the fence and watch as the Colonel and I worked the young horses over the jumps. As their training progressed, they were sold or leased to the regular students. The best went first: the biggest, prettiest, quiet ones that learned to do their jobs on their own. Soon I was left riding the small, wirey, "too smart for a rider's good" rogues. Just such a horse was Randy. The Colonel kept insisting what a good show jumper he would be. I kept insisting (only to myself, of course) that he was nothing but a crazy half-Arab. Randy would look at me with his one blue eye as if to be insisting he could if he wanted to, and he would if I just wouldn't doubt him.

As the weeks passed, Randy and I became a team. As long as I rode with a strong steady leg and soft rubber band reins and never let my mind focus anywhere but the other side of the fence, the little horse gave me his all. The Colonel had been right, of course. Randy could turn sharper and get in closer than the bigger horses. He continued to remind often during our workouts and always, it seemed, at the local horse shows that if I kept my mind on my job and never let a doubt creep in, we would bring home the ribbons. But he would refuse with no warning and send me, in a cloud of dust, to the other side, alone.

The days passed in constant routine. Rita was there every afternoon high-stepping up and down the driveway. Randy and I would have our practice and he had come to trust me enough that I could take him out after our workouts for nice quiet walks on the trail. That's when I saw them; Rita and one of the Colonel's best horses cantering smoothly around a course. How could I have completely missed what was going in?

Every day while I was mucking out stalls or working another horse in the back ring, Rita was buying the best four-legged jumping lessons in town. The conversation I overheard later from a group of riders in the hallway sent me running down the lower barn. I flung open the top door of the stall. It was empty. He was gone! The big boring black machine was gone.

"Hey-ee-ay," she gushed and giggled down the hill, and behind her followed the big chestnut thoroughbred I had seen her riding earlier that afternoon. My stomach turned and my mind began to race. I knew what it all meant. Randy and I had worked so hard to be finally ready for the big courses and the big purses that came with them, and Rita sashayed right in and bought herself a sure winner. That big horse could do it all. He was push button ready. Just steer him a little and stay on and the blue ribbon was yours. I knew because I had done most of the riding that made him that way. His price tag was as much as my yearly salary.

"Naow we can truly be friends and do things togethah." She was gushing again. I found myself just staring at those big blue eyes, the porcelain skin, and why did she have to wear all that jewelry? I fumbled through the words but managed to congratulate her on her new purchase, and she started back up the hill to find the Colonel.

I wanted to scream out at him, "How could you? I've worked so hard and this, this woman walks in and buys her ticket to the top?" But I didn't. I found myself simply saying goodnight. He was talking about the big show next weekend, but his voice trailed as I walked out towards my car.

The braids I put in Randy's black mane were flat and perfect. I brushed his gleaming coat and it shined a dark red in the soft morning light. His body rippled with muscle and his soft brown eye showed no sign of nervousness. He munched his hay quietly, and as I groomed, my thoughts drifted back to the day before. The dear Colonel had arranged for us to trailer the three hours with none other than Rita and her new steed. I was thankful it was her rig, and I pretended to sleep while she drove. We were actually on our way to the Regional Show Jumper Classic. When we arrived, Randy and I unloaded in front of the outer wooden stalls. Rita and The Captain went on to the big brick barn. When the horses were tucked in the fresh hay and water, Rita returned for me and we drove the short distance to our room. She had protested only slightly when she saw I had choosen one of those cheap but clean budget motels, and I was soon drifting in and out of sleep.

Our rides were scheduled for the afternoon. We warmed up with a few 3' to 3 1/2' classes. There were so many entries! With twenty-five and thirty riders in each class, the day seemed to drag on and on. Rita looked picture perfect. Her little navy blue coat matched her plush blue navy hunt cap and the stock pin at her throat was diamond studded gold. She and The Captain cruised effortlessly around the course, and we each had several second and third place ribbons when I finally found myself looking at that last course, the course I had come for.

The brightly painted fences were big and sturdy. The course was not tricky, but it was a true test of abilily and timing. I looked for the Colonel. I needed his quiet reassurance, but when I spotted him across the warm-up area, I saw Rita glued to him in her usual way, and I wasn't about to express my concerns in front of her.

I buttoned my old black jacket and reached for my hunt cap. I noticed it was not really black anymore, but a sort of flat grey. Years of skid marks as it met with arena sand had eaten away the velvet. I buckled the chin strap and chuckled, remembering just how many times my boots had been re-soled. As I raised up from wiping the last speck of dust form them, I found myself looking directly into that crazy blue eye. "You'd

better get it together," it was saying, and I agreed. I pulled the stirrup leathers down with a slap, yanked on my glovess and mounted up.

There were only fifteen entries in the class. The purse was $1,000: five hundred for the blue, two-fifty for the red. Anything less would barely cover my expenses. We were the seventh team to go. As our turn got closer, Randy reminded me with a toss of his head and a stomp of his foot that I had better keep my mind on the task at hand. A wind had kicked up and the little red flags at the corners of the fence made popping sounds in the breeze.

I saluted the judge and at the shrill blow of the whistle, I began my staring circle at a slow canter. The first three fences were simple wide oxers and I could hear the Colonel reminding me about thinking them too easy. Randy felt my concentration and stayed steady beneath me. Number four was a double; five, a vertical. "It will fool the eye," I heard the Colonel in my mind. Before we reached the other side of it, I was looking for the water jump. Not a toe got wet. A few more oxers, a triple, that if you went into correctly you came out of with no problem, and we were flying for the finish line. We had a clean round and that qualified us for the jump-off.

The jump would be changed and the six qualifying teams were asked to go back for a round of fewer but larger fences. I was allowing Randy to stretch with a loose reined walk when Rita and The Captain came trotting up to us. The diamonds at her throat glistened blue in the late orange sun.

"Weah made the jump-off, too," she sang out. She really did want a friend and for a moment I almost felt sorry for her. Once again I congratulated her. The Captain stood quietly sure of himself, so big I found myself having to look up to see Rita's face. I gave her a brief smile and a sporting "good luck" and continued on my way.

The short break was over and the fences were rearranged for the final ride. There were only five and as I studied them one by one my eyes came to rest on it. The last fence was the biggest fence I had seen! It was a huge spread oxer, big black barrel standing in a row with black and white striped poles across the top and down in front of the barrels-poles that made a base of ten feet and a height of five-and-a-half. I immediately began to wonder how I would ever get my little horse over that. I felt a hand patting my leg. The Colonel had appeared out of nowhere. He was telling me to ride it like any other fence, that the four riders that had gone on before me each had a refusal, a knockdown or some kind of fault. "You have room for a mistake," he said, "You can win it with his speed." With a firm slap on Randy's chest, he smiled up at me and sent us on our way.

I gave the traditional nod to the judge, the whistle blew and we went. Randy felt me close my legs and gave me the speed. He felt the squeezes in my hands and kept himself together. With a cat-like agility we cleared the first four obstacles, making smaller turns and faster time than the bigger horses. Coming off the number four fence, I looked for the monster. It loomed black and sinister at the far end of the arena. We headed straight for it. With each stride the distance seemed to get closer And then it happened. My mind just would not be quiet. "We'll never make it. He's too small. You've never put him to a fence like this."

For a moment I wasn't sure what happened. The dust from Randy's sliding stop had engulfed us. I reached down and stroked his neck almost as thought to see if he was sill under me. I couldn't see. The clock was ticking, seconds felt like hours.

I heard the Colonel again. "Don't doubt this horse. Don't doubt yourself." Randy leaped out of the dust and I put him on a tight circle. I drove my back deep into the saddle. I closed my legs and gently pushed him up to my hands. I shut out everything: the crowd, the noise, blue diamonds that buy perfect horses, and even the fence itself. I

thought only of the other side. As the monster came into view once again, I gauged each stride with precision and put Randy exactly where he needed to be for the perfect take-off. He uncoiled like a slinky. Up we went, soaring ten feet above the ground. My breath had left my body and I had started a prayer when I was jolted back to earth by the landing. We made it! I almost forget the finish line, but Randy didn't. The little horse had done it, and he showed his pride as we scrambled for the final bell. A roar came up from the crowd as they cheered the crazy half-Arab horse with the one blue eye.

I slowly came back to my senses just in time to watch the final ride. The Captain's big trot carried Rita effortlessly down to the arena. Suddenly it was okay that they would take home the blue ribbon. My day had been made and nothing could change it, but never could I have imagined what happened next. The big chestnut had easily carried the third fence. I was heading for the barn when I heard the crowd gasp. I turned to see Rita lurching forward to grab anything that would keep her on that horse. Somehow, she found his throat. She was perched on top then thrown under The Captain's huge neck, her arms and legs clamped so tightly I knew she wasn't going to hit the ground. The Captain came quietly to a stop and immediately a dozen human bands began prying her from his body. Not hurt, but badly shaken, she was half-carried out of the arena.

I was on the ground and pushing my way through the crowd. I broke through and ran to see if my "friend" was okay. She was still trembling when I reached her.

"Oh thank Gawd you ah heah!" she cried. Her arms reached up around my neck and I felt her begin to relax against my shoulder.

I drove us home the next day with thoughts of new boots and hunting caps. Rita insisted on hanging my blue ribbon on the rear view mirror. She laughed and gushed about all the horse shows we would go to in the "futchah" and how much fun we would have. That was sixteen years ago, sixteen years of noticing how beautiful diamonds glisten blue in a late orange sun.

Melody Pate

Fear the Pleasure
If you have not felt
the Pain

Deborah M.G. Berthelot

ODYSSEUS' EXCUSE

I've always been faithful to you, my Penelope,

So ignore what you've heard. Woman, you must believe me!

Don't listen to what Homer and the others implied--

They're just jealous of my feats - so jealous, they lied.

Yea, I've heard the rumors and I know what you've been told-

It's true I slept with goddesses - they had me in their hold.

While on Ogygia, I spent the nights with Kalypso,

But she had me under her spell - I couldn't say no!

Why, I dreamed my sexual partner was none other than thee.

And when I slept with Kirke, I always thought of you, dear.

Yes, I thought of you. So now I'm sure it's quite clear

That you've nothing to forgive me for, my love.

By the way, how have you spent these past twenty years, my dove?

Lori Lassiter

CLEANSING

The man in the sink . . . . . waits.
He waits for someone to wash away the old, cruddy dirt from their hands
so he can attack their fresh beautiful smiles of relief and piety.

No more longing over what's past and things changed, he thought.
This time . . . . Yes! This time we're going to get them.
They will feel prolonged agony for what they said about me ten years ago.

Ha! You can't see me because I'm dead.
If only you could sense my presence
you'd never want to be clean again.

A small child walks by the sink and says
I want to play!
It is holding in its hand a sailboat and turns the faucets of the sink
now filling up with water. The child laughs as the sailboat spins around

and then the water spills on to the floor and the mother comes in screaming and the toy boat turns over.

The mother walks over to the sink and reaches to turn the faucets, but the water is gone.

The man laughs. The mother turns around to slap the child for being so dumb

but the child is holding a basin of water

and the mother can't think to get out of the house.

The child laughs as it pours the water on to the slippery floor and throws the basin at its mother's back.

The child goes back to its room . . . . and rests.

It is waiting for the rain.

Sheryll Romano

BOOK BAG

Book bag - the words don't really inspire any emotions, other than perhaps a touch of resentment at the almost permanent indention most of us sport as a result of the shoulder strap. But, think about it. You probably spend more time with your book bag than with your family, friends, or even significant other. During school hours, and maybe while studying, that book bag is all things to you. It is your security blanket, your means of organizing your life, a necessary tool for your degree. College life would disintegrate if book bags were suddenly unavailable. You spend valuable minutes each morning checking to see that the bag is properly equipped to see you through your grueling day, to come to your rescue in your hour of need.

I believe a scientific study of the contents of book bags on the UM campus would be revealing. Though I have a suspicion that money would not rank high on the list (I'll confess that may come from personal experience), I'm sure I can offer some relatively accurate guesses. Books, notebooks, pencils, ID cards and keys, of course, surely would top the findings. But how about aspirin, lipstick, love notes and good luck charms. Gum, cough drops, letters from home, lists of things to do, tissues, interesting phone numbers, candy wrappers, calculators, combs and charge cards might take top billing. Photos, articles of clothing, food, dog-eared rough drafts and finished assignments, polished and ready for the professors' scrutiny, could also be included. In fact the list would be almost without end. Contents aside, what do the pouches really mean to each of us?

The bag represents toil, frustration, disappointment, stress and fatigue. However, it also stands for satisfaction, gratification, ambition, determination, tenacity and pride.

Though we each tend to walk with a slight tilt to the left or right, depending on which shoulder supports the weight, our book bags are symbols of our hopes and dreams, and help to keep us anchored on our chosen paths.

Michael Shine

THE D'S of LIFE

Dumb and Disastrous people call you,
but Direct are your paths

Doubts overwhelm your Destinations,
but he who is the Driver of life
holds you under his wings.

Dreams seem to be Deterred
and Difficult are the ways that
Determine your success.

Disappointments are many, and
Destiny is put on hold
but there is peace
in knowing that
Daylight still shines
and someday
the Dove of Heaven
will unlock his Door
and whisper,
"Lay Down Sweet Child
Lay Down."

Shelia Smith

Jerri Buckingham Hardesty

A DEEPER PEACE
(Our Wedding Song)

Your love touches lightly,
Soft as a breeze,
It kisses me deeply
As violet-hued sky,
It stirs my emotion
As rock-swirled waves
And brings to mind
A deeper peace.
Yours words soothe my senses
Like rain in the spring,
They give me strong hope
And new understanding,
Safe in the sound
Of loving caress
That brings to my heart
A deeper peace.
Your gaze warms my thoughts
With comforting glow
Of first morning sun
Of dusk's last red show,
In your eyes I see all
Of the dreams we can share
I bask in the view of
A deeper peace.
Your touch brings to life
The fires within me,
Nurtures the passion,
The wild-sweet and care-free
Love in abandon,
Shared and complete,
And brings to my soul
A deeper peace.

Aimee K. Thornton

MY SPELL

Hold fast to that feeling at the core of your heart.
It's a piece of you which I know I'm a part.
Your mind . . .
Your loins . . .
Let them ache too
'til your thoughts of me become beautifully new.
Then cease this madness!
Hear's my prayer, do you hear?
Don't push me gently away
to keep me comfortably near.
Rediscover me: realize, oh wanderer of the world:
I'm the magical gem with yet more wonders to unfurl.
The spell has been cast.
May you see at last
that it's real - not our dream - not an illusion.
May your true but troubled heart soon end its confusion.

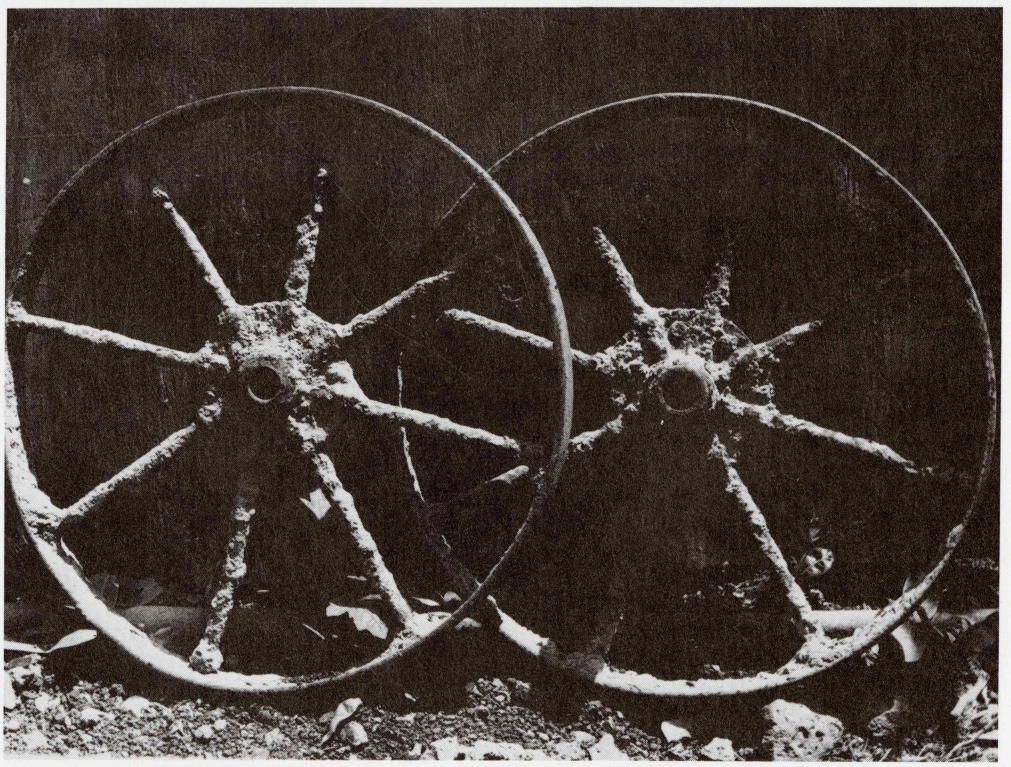
SHORT TRAGEDY

A Duel of the hearts
is a most tragic war,
for it unravels our short
thread of life some more.

Jay M. Ritchie

STARING AT A WALL

Staring at a wall, I see the
infirmities of life.
The stillness, the expressionlessness,
the hard, cold tone of never doing.
Being built means not being free
and freedom has its price;
for walls do not speak.
Concrete binds with
no cohesion.
Life started anew doesn't
scale these walls.
In them, secrets are hidden and
a voice no longer talks
of funs and fancies of long ago.
To be that wall would mean
certain exile.
To not be that wall would mean
certain freedom.



Dominican Wheels Alejandra De La Paz

Sharon Evans

SONG OF THE SIDEWALK

My feet were on the sidewalk
And the rest of me at sea
The day myself was washed ashore;
A pile of soggy dreams.

Cats - they love to bite and scratch
Brooms - they love to clean
But I vowed with nails in palm
That nothing kills a dream!

I spread my dreams on rocks to dry
And fanned them with some leaves.
But what can you do for a dying lifetime
But stare and cry while it bleeds.

Brushes untangle and combs re-arrange
Mirror gets in on the scheme
But I vowed with hands in hair
That nothing kills a dream!

But here I am, back on the sidewalk
Where everything is Yes or No.
But sometimes I wonder when waves pull me under
Where did my soggy dreams go?

C. Fleetion

FROM WITHIN

How I long to be with you. There have been many times when I lay in my bed dreaming and thinking of you. You are constantly on my mind every day and every night. How I wish I could touch and hold you in my arms. To touch your silky skin, rub my fingers through your hair, to kiss your lips so tenderly as if they've never been kissed before.

You turn me on just by your simple movement, your lovely smile, your sparkling eyes, and your tantalizing voice. I have never felt like this before. You do something to me that sets my heart on fire. I need you. I want you. I must have you.

I can't bring myself to face and tell you how I feel. Every time I speak to you, I feel like I'm going to explode. I try to tell you how I feel, but I can't lift my tongue, my lips refuse to move, and I try to make a sound, but I can't. I don't think I can wait much longer to desperately tell you how much I want you and must have you with me - soon, very soon.

I feel like I'm going to burst right now. My heart beats faster and faster every moment I think of you. I wish each second was spent with you. If I saw your face, heard your voice, or smelled the fragrance of your body, wild horses could not hold me back. I desperately love, want, and need you.

Each moment that I share with you is like a dream come true. Even though you don't know how intimate I feel for you, those moments with you make me feel like the luckiest person alive. I don't know how a person can make me feel the way you make me feel. I have never felt like this before.

I LOVE YOU!

Alejandra De La Paz

UNCERTAINTY

Your laughter explodes
debris falls on me
adheres to my body
tickling me until i rebel
with a smile

Your conversation becomes
my accomplice
distracts you
while i examine your eyes
and your lips in ecstasy

Your kiss awakens
my innocence
whispers forbidden words
to my ears
shows me a world
of anticipation

Your thought is hiding from me
words come in its defense
speaking to me in a language
hard to decipher

Laughter, Conversation,
Kiss, Thought . . .
don't give me a clue . . .
and i am afraid to ask.

Melody Pate

EMILY KNEW

I took out my soul today without a surgeon's hand
Only a poet's mind
The sound of silence was quite soothing
I timidly touched it there in my sweaty palm
And I felt the deepest winds of winter

But it remained there steadily alone
Frightened, I placed the whole back again
And in a movement I caught a glimpse
Of my outline in the glass
And looking through the green to the other end
It was empty
Yet steady in its own right
A blood warmed body used to fill space . . . .
Emily, am I upon the hour of lead?
Shall I outlive it with far too much remembrance
Securing my space but needing to rent another astounds my debt

Maybe if I could put a whole in my palm
And merge it immeasurable warmth
Suck it dry and drain it into my own
Stab it with my pain
For we all know a chuckle is soon unheard
But a tear waters the sea within my soul

SIGNIFICANT FACES

I KNEW YOU BEFORE
IN A PREVIOUS LIFE
WHEN THERE WAS A TRAGIC ORDER
AND LIVES WERE AS WELL DEFINED
AND ORGANIZED AS A FINELY SET DINNER TABLE
HOWEVER I DON'T REMEMBER YOUR NAME

Lori Lassiter

'OUGHTA'

"Now don't get me wrong, I'm not out to get ya!"
said the lady on the streetmarket corner.
"But to be honest with ya
it's your money that this here nigger
wants to catch hold of
with her dirty palms.
My talk gives you the qualms
don't it, Mr, Floyd?
You just a white trash paranoid!"
The white trash paranoid looked at her and said
"You ain't got what I'm looking for
so you shut yer head
'for I take my gun out and shoot you dead."
The nigger on the streetcorner gave Mr. Floyd a sly look
and waved
at the man she knew
leaning on the barricade.
The man walked over to where Mr. Floyd stood
saying, "My, Mr. Whitey, that ensemble
sure do look good!
And if you don't get outta here
at this very moment
you gonna look like you didn't deserve to own it!"
The man held his knife in mid-air
The white trash made a grumbling sound
and didn't even stare
at the streetcorner lady
with Afro hair.
He said to her companion
"It was nice knowin' ya!"
And as he walked off he saw a sign that read
"I'll bet ya didn't even know
who to go to when you thought you oughta."
"Oughta what?"
He said to himself as he walked out onto the street
and thought he saw a welfare lady
getting on the bus
that didn't hold a them or an us.
He said, "Surely not, Welfare ladies are rich!"
And as she disappeared out of sight
he fell into a construction ditch.
Meanwhile at the streetcorner the man said
"I guess I'll be heading back to the barricades
that were put up by a worker in a potato sack!"
The lady smiled and said
"Thanks for the favor!"
He said, "Sure, no problem, I know I'm a savior."
The savior walked back to the place
where the barricades had been laid
and didn't know what to do
as he saw a sign that read
"Construction is over.
A white man fell dead
into our hole where we sweat and bled.
Now the barricades are moving to the next streetcorner
that has a sign saying
I'll bet ya didn't even know who to go to when
you thought you oughta."

Michelle Durham

UNTITLED

Red stands for Universal
White represents Stability
Blue means Aware
And the stars and stripes symbolize a Motherland full of hope,
freedom, and overwhelming care.
Separately they mean nothing: together they spell U.S.A.
She crusades with the rest of the world to unite and make
a bold stand.
For it is not the United States versus Iraq, it is Iraq
versus the world.

Our right hands embrace our hearts, a statue with torch in hand
reaches out, the flag waves high now more than ever, and
thousands of voices speak from beneath a gigantic, black
marble wall to remind us of the cost of life, liberty,
and justice.

Humanity is priceless-
We cannot allow our hands to remain in our back pockets,
while a tyrant attempts to strip a country and endanger
his own, only to enrich his hungry ego.

To our men and women in the Middle East-
YOU stand for Universal
You represent future Stability
And WE are Aware of your loyalty, courage, and spirit.

Be not afraid, you are not alone
Turn to your neighbor and look in his eyes,
With God's grace as a stepping stone
Dry those tears, and shout with euphoric cries . . . GOD SPEED . . .

Lori Lassiter

YOU WON'T FIND THEM SCREAMING IN GROCERY STORES

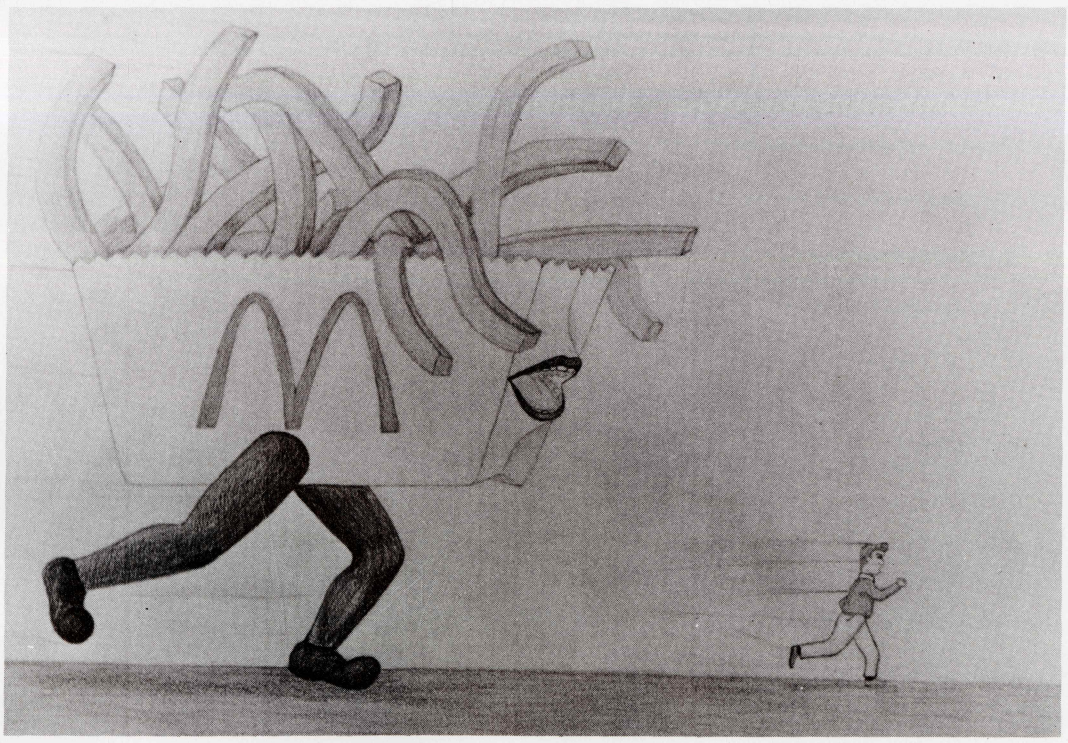
The Kids who will never get Happy Meals
or go down the slide at McDonald's playground
are the ones
who will never know the warmth of a space heater
or the brightness of a color television set

You will never hear them complain
of toys advertised in between cartoons they cannot get
or of video games they don't know how to play yet

Their parents will never take them to shopping malls
where they can ride the merry-go-round
devour ice cream at Baskin-Robbins
and buy clothing from OshKosh B'Gosh

These children are the children
of bleak deserted American city streets
children of third-world countries
with dried blood on their feet

The only environment they'll ever know
is a landscape devoid of safety
and Santa Claus magic snow



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